



**Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Southern District of Texas**

Donald J. DeGabrielle, Jr. • United States Attorney

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

APRIL 17, 2006

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JOHN YEMBRICK

PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE

(713) 567-9388

COUNTERFEIT CHECK COSTS NIGERIAN NATIONAL PRISON TERM

HOUSTON – A Nigerian national will be serving 71 months in federal prison, without parole, for bank fraud and possessing a forged security, United States Attorney Don DeGabrielle announced today. Adeshina Olanrewaju Lawal, 30, a legal immigrant from Nigeria residing in Richmond, was sentenced today by United States District Judge Lynn N. Hughes. Lawal was convicted by a jury's verdict of the two federal felony charges on January 11, 2006. Upon being released from prison, Judge Hughes further ordered Lawal be under the supervision of the United States Probation Office for a period of five years; however, Lawal is also subject to being deported from the United States by immigration authorities.

The investigation that ultimately led to Lawal's conviction began in 2004, when Lawal's friend and employee of Washington Mutual Bank contacted an inspector with the U.S. Postal Inspection Service. The bank employee told the inspector that Lawal had asked her to help him steal high-end bank account information. The employee told the inspector she believed Lawal was involved in an identity theft and a bank fraud scheme.

Under the direction of the U.S. Postal Inspector, the bank employee contacted Lawal. She told him she could not access the type of account information he wanted without the effort being easily traced to her. Given this circumstance, Lawal asked the bank employee whether she would be willing to deposit fraudulent checks into her bank account for him. Lawal also asked her to obtain a cashier's check so that he could use it as a sample to counterfeit large checks. On September 19, 2004, as requested, the employee provided Lawal with a \$20 Washington Mutual check to use as a sample.

On November 1, 2004, while Postal Inspectors watched, Lawal met the bank employee in a parking lot at Westheimer and Wilcrest in Southwest Houston. At this meeting, Lawal delivered to the bank employee a counterfeit check in the amount of \$435,361 that he claimed he had received from his contacts in Nigeria with instructions to deposit into her account, then withdraw the money, and split it with him when the check cleared. Lawal was arrested by agents after he delivered the counterfeit check.

Lawal has been in federal custody without bond since his arrest on November 1, 2004.

This case was investigated by inspectors of the United States Postal Inspection Service and is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Jay Hileman.